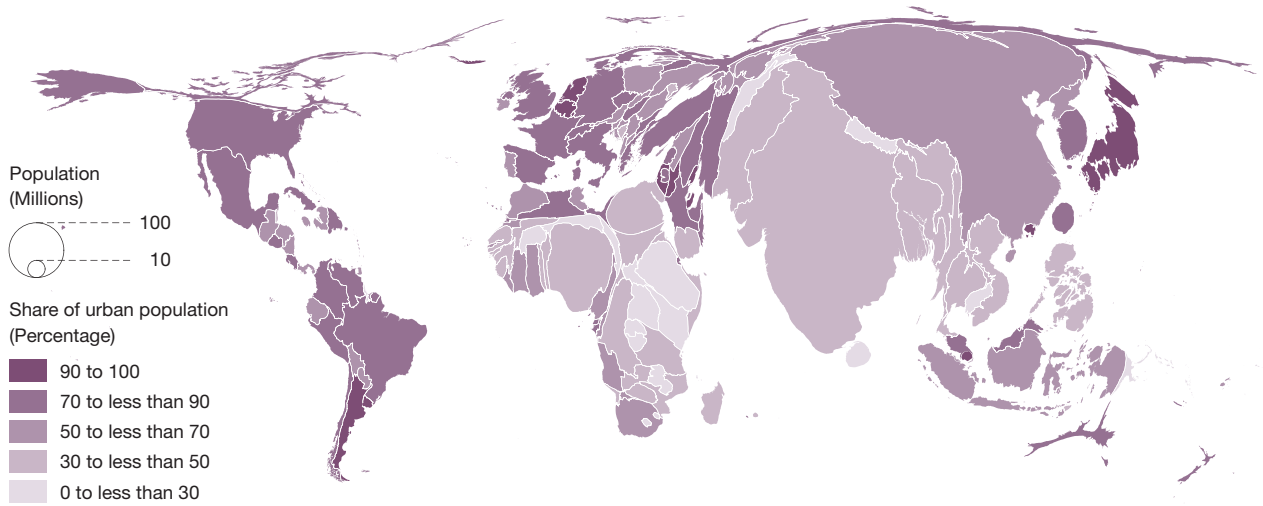




Fact sheet #11: Total and urban population

Map 1 | World population, 2017



Concepts and definitions

The population estimates and projections reported in this chapter represent the “de facto” population as of the 1st of July of a given year (United Nations, 2017).

The figures for the years 2015–2050 are based on the medium variant projection. This assumes that the average fertility rate of the world will decline from 2.5 births per woman in 2010–2015 to 2.2 in 2045–2050. Future population growth is highly dependent on the path that future fertility will take. Relatively small changes in the frequency of childbearing, when projected over several decades, can generate large differences in total population (ibid.).

Urban population is defined as the “de facto” population living in areas classified as urban according to the criteria used by each country or territory (United Nations, 2018b).

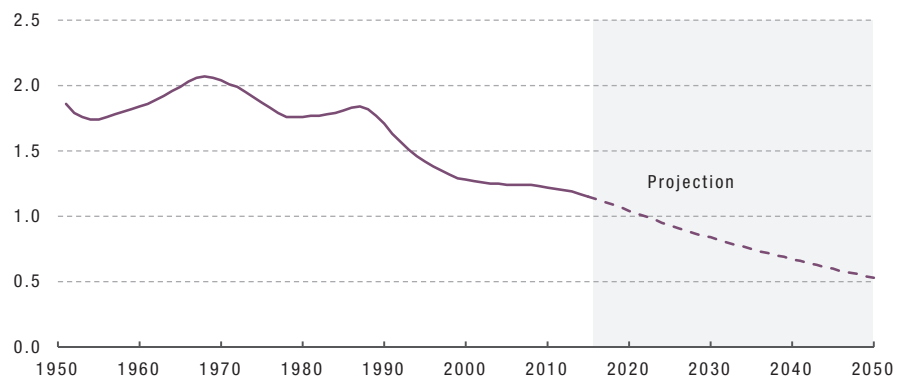
World population growth slowing down

In 2017, the world population grew at an annual rate of 1.1 per cent - half the rate of 50 years ago. The year 1969 marked a peak in population growth, when the growth rate was 2.1 per cent. Population growth dropped considerably during the 1970s and 1990s. From 2003 to 2008, it remained almost unchanged, staying between 1.2 and 1.3 per cent, and since then has fallen slightly again. Population growth is forecast to continue decreasing, falling to an annual rate of only 0.5 per cent by 2050.

Geographic distribution

Many Asian economies are home to particularly large populations relative to the geographic space available. One third of the world population lives, in almost equal proportions, in China and India. Among the ten most populated economies worldwide, the population of Nigeria, the seventh largest, is the fastest growing.

Figure 1 | Annual growth rate of world population (Percentage)



Note: Annual exponential rate of growth of the population (see UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2018, annex 6.3).

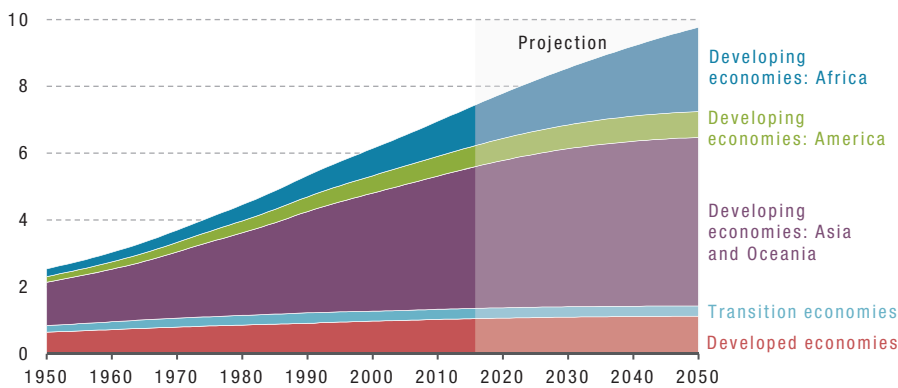


Developing economies drive population growth

In 2017, the world population reached 7.55 billion people. Given the current growth rate of 1.1 per cent, an additional 83 million people are added each year. According to projections, by 2050, the global population will reach almost 10 billion people.

Today, 6.2 billion people, i.e. four fifths of the world's total, live in developing economies. In the 1950s, their share was only two thirds. The population of Africa has been expanding particularly strongly (in 2017, by 2.5 per cent). It is forecast to continue to do so also over the next three decades.

Figure 2 World population by group of economies (Billions)

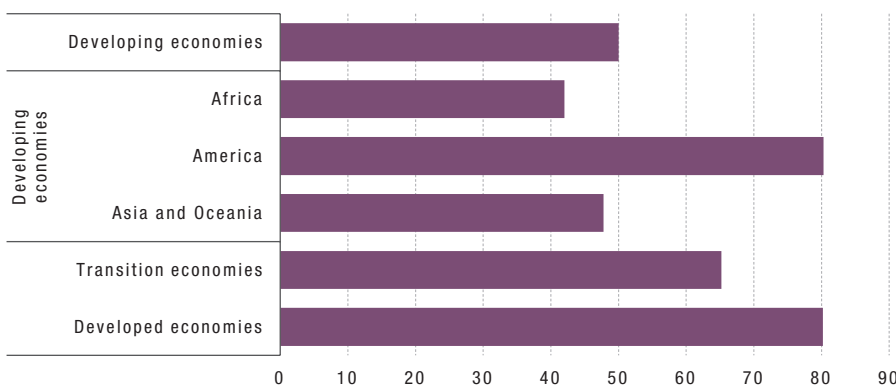


Urbanization continues

Around the world, slightly more people live in urban than in rural areas. The proportion of urban population is growing and is forecast to increase from 55 per cent in 2017 to 68 per cent by 2050.

Africa has a particularly small share of urban population. In 2017, 42 per cent of African people lived in cities. In many Eastern African economies, the share was less than 30 per cent. Large parts of Southern and South-Eastern Asia are also predominantly rural, with an urban population share of less than 50 per cent for developing economies in Asia and Oceania on average. By contrast, in American developing economies, urban populations are as high as in developed economies, accounting for, on average, 80 per cent in 2017.

Figure 3 Urban population by group of economies, 2017 (Percentage of total population)



For references, see UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2018, annex 6.4.

1/3 of world population live in China and India



83 million more people live on earth each year



Africa's population growing at more than double the speed of world average



More than half of the world population live in urban areas

